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Greater Manchester Social Work Academy (GMSWA) careers fair 27th April 2018 evaluation report

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GMSWA Careers Fair 27th April 2018 Evaluation Report

*"I have gained knowledge which I can build
confidence from. A day worth it. "*

Student at Careers Fair 2018

*"Thank you for this lovely opportunity and to meet
students and hear their path aspirations and
enthusiasm- "*

Employer at Careers Fair 2018

Introduction

Careers Fairs for students have traditionally been held individually by each University. It is an opportunity for education and practice to come together for the benefit of the students we teach and prepare for careers as qualified and registered social work professionals.

The benefits of organising such an event are;

- Students get to meet employers and find out what they expect from them in the interview process.
- Students gain first-hand knowledge of any local initiatives linked to the agency where they are considering applying to and which they need to be aware of prior to their application for a job.
- Employers have the opportunity to meet prospective employees and promote what it is like to work for their agency and share new job opportunities.
- The Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) begin to embed the notion of life-long learning to their students, from degrees to masters, to practice education, to CPD, to lecturing, to doctorates, this links to the internal external expectations of employability for the students they teach.

The Social Work Department at the University of Salford responded to a request by Greater Manchester Social Work Academy's (GMSWA) to hold their first collaborative employment Careers Fair in April 2018. The University of Salford worked closely with members of the GMSWA partnership; Colleagues from the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University were integral to the planning and design of the event meeting on a regular basis to organise it. Suggestions based on prior experience of similar events and new ideas were made in the GMSWA meetings by employers and HEI's was fully considered and integrated into the planning of the event and fed back regularly via the GMSWA Practice Learning Partnership meetings. This combined consultation helped shape what employers were looking for in terms of employability and skill sets required to apply for jobs in a competitive market. It also met the needs of the final year social work students from all three HEI's in terms of preparing them for their future careers and application for employment and creating an environment for them to meet future employers and alumni students to share their knowledge and experience.

In the short timeframe we had the three HEI's met on a regular basis between the months of February and April 2018. The focus was to bring together the ten local authorities from Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan with other agencies involved, from the Private Voluntary Independent Sector (PVI) including the agency One Stop Social and final year social work students from the three HEI's University of Salford, Manchester Metropolitan University and University of Manchester.

Our collaboration was to showcase our joint work and what we can achieve together in Social Work Practice and Education and ultimately raise the profile of social work practitioners across the North West and on a wider scale, nationally.

Agencies who attended

Local Authorities:

Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

Manchester

Rochdale

Salford

Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust

Stockport

Wigan

Bury

Private Voluntary and Independent Sector:

Early Break

Richmond Fellowship

Turning Point

Caritas Salford

Catch 22

Higher Education Institutes:

University of Salford Social Work Team

University of Salford (Continual Professional Development)

University of Salford Careers Service

University of Manchester Social Work Team

University of Manchester Careers Service

University of Manchester Alumni Team

Manchester Metropolitan University Social Work Team

Manchester Metropolitan University Careers Service

Attendees:

All students booked via Eventbrite which The University of Salford professional administration managed. The event had several elements to it, which all derived from the feedback from HEI's previous experiences of careers fairs and student feedback and employers in terms of their recruitment policies. All ten local authorities from the GMSWA were invited along with some of the private and voluntary sector agencies.

All three Universities were encouraged to invite key stakeholders from their establishments, which would benefit the students and also employers, this included colleagues from the University careers service, CPD, ASYE information for students/social workers. Tea, coffee and biscuits was provided to the students, and lunch for the stall holders and workshop facilitators.

We organised six elements to be available to students on the day. These were organised to ensure that we covered all elements of employability. The C.V. preparation stage, the application stage, the interview stage, and further development (CPD). Below are a summary of the events which we held throughout the day;

Employers and HEI Stalls (available all day):

There were information stalls managed by employers and provided an opportunity for students to approach them in a relaxed environment and have that face-to-face discussion with employers which is so important and integral to the outcomes of what GMSWA were hoping to achieve. Some employers provided information on current jobs which they had available for students to consider and discuss.

Careers Service Application Workshop (a.m. and p.m. sessions):

The careers services from all 3 Universities worked together to offer a collaborative presentation on application form skills, using various methods, using the STAR approach. The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to a behavioural-based interview question by discussing the specific situation, task, action, and result. This offered an opportunity for students to gain additional advice on applying for jobs.

Prior to the event, students were invited and encouraged to bring their C.V's on the day of the careers fair. We also felt it was important to provide an opportunity for students to be able to speak to the careers service and have the opportunity to seek specific advice on areas which they were struggling on with their C.V.'s, which they may not have felt comfortable in speaking about in a group setting. After the presentations each careers service was available to go through individual or small group discussions.

Employers Interviewing Skills Workshop: (a.m. and p.m. sessions):

Employers were on hand to offer practical sessions on what they expect in interviews. Students were able to hear first-hand from employers what skills were required to be observed in an interview and to provide concrete advice to students on interview technique.

Post Qualification and Continual Professional Development (CPD):

We also made available information for students and indeed social work practitioners who may be interested in continuing their education and/or doing some additional training and further information on ASYE.

NQSW Panel: (p.m. only)

Universities were encouraged to invite members of their social work alumni along to share their interview experiences since qualifying. Five newly qualified social work practitioners from the University of Salford delivered a seminar where they shared their personal journeys since qualifying. This provided real-life information and guidance to students from all Universities, tips on researching widely, not just the role you are applying for but also the area, to find out what local initiatives are for service user's, offering support on not needing to worry, offering positive messages if people had not had the placement they wanted and how this was dealt with when applying for jobs along with an open sense of what life was like on the other side in practice! Students were able to ask questions informally about anything they wanted to. Afterwards the social workers made themselves available on designated table for one-to-one questions with students.

NQSW Interviews: (all day):

The University of Manchester had recorded interviews with two of their NQSWs and this was played with subtitles on a screen in the foyer.

Speed Interviews: Simulated Practice with Employers- (p.m. only)

Students were encouraged to attend a fun practical session, which involved them sitting down in a large area full of employers and careers staff to have 5-minute speed interviews with them. Employers and Careers staff had a range of questions which were asked in social work interviews supplied by the employers/careers service. Following the mini interview, students then received immediate feedback on what they had done well and areas on which they could develop. Students could then choose to practice this skill with someone else or choose another professional and another question to be asked.

Evaluation:

Attendees were asked three specific questions:

- 1) What aspects of the event did you find most helpful?
- 2) What aspects of the event were least helpful and what changes do you suggest?
- 3) What did you learn that was useful and how will you put this into practice? Please give three examples

| Evaluations | Number of agencies attending | Number of agency evaluations received | Number of students attending | Number of students evaluations received |
|-------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| | 18 | 12 | 84 | 28 |

Qualitative findings from Students:

This was the first GMSWA Careers Fair and students were asked to consider the entirety of it; if it had helped them in any way and for ideas on how we could improve this for future years. Students were invited to comment on what they found most and least helpful as well being asked specifically on what they had learnt.

Although the response for the evaluations return was lower than the numbers attending, the evaluations received were thorough and generated a lot of data.

Stall holders were invited to also comment, however with hindsight a separate evaluation form should have been identified with additional questions.

Using the 3 questions to guide the responses to the evaluation have been organised into themes which are as follows:

Theme One: Meeting Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW)

There was an overwhelming positive result from students that clearly derived from students being able to listen to and feel confident enough to ask any question of the Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) Panel. The session is reported as being extremely beneficial to them and there appeared to have been a definite connection made between the two parties. Which resulted in students really valuing the 'lived experience' of the NQSW's and their professional advice, maybe the closeness between the students own current situation and the NQSW's helped this to be a positive experience for all, involved with no negative or developmental comments made at all. Comments from NQSW's and lecturers at the HEI's, echoed how powerful they all felt this session was for students to hear.

What aspects of the event did you find most helpful?

"The Q&A session with NQSW was really useful in giving me an idea of what employers are looking for in applications/interviews as well as their experiences of making the transition from SW [social work] student to NQSW + beyond and how they have managed specific aspects of other roles". (P1)

"...meeting newly qualified social worker. I have got [an] idea now that when I should apply, what questions I will be asked, and how I can prepare myself." (P9)

"NQSW panel- It was interesting to hear real life experiences of post qualifying. It made it more of a reality." (P11)

"Being able to see newly qualified workers and get practical advice." (P12)

"The session with the NQSW- very helpful tips shared. Good to hear about their experience." (P15)

"I found the NQSW panel the most helpful." (P24)

What did you learn that was useful and how will you put this into practice?

"How to manage home/work environments" (P2)

“Having self-belief” (P8)

“The importance of supervision” (P2)

“The ability to ask questions to a broad audience”. (P6)

“Self-care of yourself” (P8)

“NQSW Panel- experiences entering employment.” (P25)

Theme Two: Meeting Employers and HEI representatives (CPD)

Students found the option to meet and chat with employers to be crucial element of the day. Nobody reported anything negative, albeit one comment on the need for the Interview session to be more general to all interviews as opposed to the agency delivering the workshop. Students did comment on wanting a wider range of employers, and although there were agencies present from the mental health and adult sector, their responses indicate that they would like to see more, or at least an equal proportion of Children and Families, Adults, and Mental Health Services. However, with the short notice and timescale provided for this event, we recognise that this may have been difficult for many agencies.

What aspects of the event did you find most helpful?

“Good range of stand. Welcoming nature of the people on the stands.” (P14)

“The broad range of Councils in attendance” (P6)

“Staff used PCF [Professional Capabilities Framework] language, maybe without realising it. It seemed a part of their normal language.” (P23)

“The ability to ask questions to a broad audience”. (P6)

“[Meeting] different organisations” (P10)

“Speaking to organisations and making connections- email addresses taking.” (P20)

“Speaking to employers +knowing what is available.” (P21)

What aspects of the event were least helpful and what changes do you suggest?

“More jobs covering South Manchester; Stockport, in particular Tameside.” (P25)

“Needs more varied fields speaking i.e. mental health and adults” (P13)

“Not very many [employer stands] that related to myself would have liked to have talked to someone from Cafcass.” (P16)

“No Tameside [council], would have liked to have met them.” (P27)

“More employers from mental health, overly, [in the main] Children & Families professionals.” (P26)

“Found the interview session to be a bit of a pitch by the organisation rather than an info session.” (P22)

“More stalls of additional employers with related social work roles.” (P25)

What did you learn that was useful and how will you put this into practice?

“There seem to be some jobs.” (P14)

“Learn organisation method and slogans.” (P22)

“How different LA’s operate- e.g. Using restorative practice/S.O.S. How they differ in organisation- localities, duty teams.” (P15)

“School social work” [Caritas] (16)

Process of some Councils working before HCPC registration.” (P20)

“Tools to use in relation to DV [Domestic violence].” (P21)

“Employers stall- gaining information about services.” (P25)

“More about the ASYE programmes offered +how these differ between LA’s”. (P1)

“Info about ASYE”. (P7)

Theme Three: The Venue

The venue had mixed responses from the organisers and attendees; the wow factor of being in a modern environment at Media City with an art installation, to visit at the same time conflicted with issues of cold air blowing in from the automatic doors which lead into the open plan aspect. The accessibility was an issue in terms of what the agencies needed to bring and the distance from the car parks.

What aspects of the event were least helpful and what changes do you suggest?

“The venue- took a while to get here as I live in Bury. Maybe a more central location- be easier for those what don’t drive although seems there are good links with public transport.” (P1)

“Parking” (P7)

“Media City is difficult to get to.” (P14)

“A programme of events in the foyer.” (P19)

“Better signposting/announcements for event!”(P19)

Theme Four: Timing of the event

There was one comment about communication to students who were out on placement and the timescales of informing students, which is always particularly difficult when students are having to navigate usually an additional work email, as well as their personal and university email. Invariably access to the latter can become intermittent when students are out on placement, which we need to consider in future planning.

What aspects of the event were least helpful and what changes do you suggest?

“Communication prior to the event because we are on placement.” (P2)

“No changes, Actually, making it clear that this is a placement day as the sessions in the event enable us to have reflective convo’s (conversations).” (p8)

“I will suggest that it should not be designed for the whole day.” (P9)

“Time management- not sure when the last session was held + missed it.” (P20)

“Incorporate more breaks” (P24)

Theme Five: The Application and Interview Process

The application and interview workshops were very well received. There was one attendee who felt the application could have been more detailed and the other negative comment was that the attendee was unable to apply for a job on the day (although agencies were encouraged to bring and did supply job details on the day). There was some real learning here for HEI's with regards to utilising our Careers Service more within our academic programmes and embedding basic information within their application form, i.e. referring to their placement experience, researching the agency that they wish to apply to etc. The majority of students found the use of the STAR approach extremely useful.

What aspects of the event did you find most helpful?

"[The] A.M. application forms session." (P22)

What aspects of the event were least helpful and what changes do you suggest?

"The application session could be a bit more detailed." (P11)

"Not being able to actually apply for jobs." (P12)

What did you learn that was useful and how will you put this into practice?

"To do more research in the company's values and mention it in the interview." (P3)

"Personally, I found the mock interview and filling out the application form very helpful because they were two areas, I needed more help with..." (P3)

"I've learnt regarding the support we can access in regard to the application process." (P4)

"I am now very confident in my job search and I am relieved from employability worries." (P5)

"How I can use transferable skills in my interview, thank you so much for your help" (P9)

"Understanding how to follow a person spec [specification] correctly." (P27)

"Star approach for job applications." (P11)

“Staying confident throughout the process.” (P12)

“Examples to have for interview.” (P13)

“Write about placement [in the application form].” (P18)

“Where and how to apply for jobs.” (P26)

Qualitative findings with Employers:

There was what first appeared as a missed opportunity in our gathering evaluations. The importance of feedback from employer, was not incorporated as fully as we would want. This could be because of the regular GMSWA collaborative meetings; however, this was a shortfall of integral data. We managed to gain feedback; however, the questions were not employer focussed. However, the information provided by employers has allowed us to identify some themes which demonstrate the dual benefits of holding a Careers Event such as this.

Using the 3 questions asked, we were able to organise data into the following themes:

Theme One: Recruitment (Student Engagement)

What aspects of the event did you find most helpful?

“A good range of stalls- as an employer there was a good footfall” (P30)

“Meeting students -significant amount of applicants as a result” (P34)

“As an employer it has been a great opportunity to meet lots of enthusiastic prospective employees- very well attended.” (P31)

“The opportunity to talk to students about C&F SW.” (P32)

What aspects of the event were least helpful and what changes do you suggest?

“It was all good” (P33)

What did you learn that was useful and how will you put this into practice?

“Awareness and promotion of services” (P33)

“Good to have the details of recruitment sessions” (P36)

“Thank you for this lovely opportunity and to meet students and hear their path aspirations and enthusiasm- Lovely” (P37)

“What students are looking for” (P33)

Theme Two: Networking Opportunities

What aspects of the event did you find most helpful?

“I loved networking with other services and building links” (P33)

“Great to see students, uni’s [universities], staff teams, other agencies- speaking to each other.” (P38)

“Good and lots of engagement. Good to meet others and network.” (P39)

What did you learn that was useful and how will you put this into practice?

“Role of the AMHP Leaflet from Manchester” (P29)

“One Stop Social- a good resource for employers” (P36)

“Conversation tool for staff supervision – Wigan” (P29)

“[Meeting] backgrounds and variety of professionals too!” (P37)

Theme Three: The Venue

What aspects of the event did you find most helpful?

“A good venue” (P30)

“Venue is Fab” (P33)

“Good venue” (P39)

What aspects of the event were least helpful and what changes do you suggest?

“A bigger venue/room... dropping off materials for the stand was hard work!”

“Venue- very draughty” (P34)

“Bigger tables please” (P38)

“Parking/Accessibility” (P39)

Theme Four: Timing of the event

What aspects of the event were least helpful and what changes do you suggest?

“More notice please for next time” (P38)

What did you learn that was useful and how will you put this into practice?

“Are we timing our recruitment to students completing courses?” (P32)

Theme Six: General comments

What aspects of the event did you find most helpful?

“Lovely welcome at the front door and lively and welcoming atmosphere”. (P37)

What aspects of the event were least helpful and what changes do you suggest?

“Our media films did not have sound or subtitles. They also needed to be next to our stand”. (P32)

“N/A” (P37)

What did you learn that was useful and how will you put this into practice?

“How to communicate information to prospective employees” (P40)

“I need to remember to bring a notepad!” (P36)

“Methods to communicate to interested students.” (P39)

“Information needed for stalls.” (P40)

The overall findings from the evaluation suggest that all attendees found the event beneficial and fit for purpose in terms of what GMSWA aimed to achieve. Having the intersection of all three elements under one roof; students (past and present), employers and HEI representatives creates an atmosphere which is so very productive and provides the, 'enthusiastic and aspirational environment' which people refer to throughout the evaluations.

It is clear that encouraging excellent networking opportunities for local authority staff and students, not only benefit these individuals directly but then have the wider benefit of cascading to service provision and service users who may well receive a wider access to resources as a result.

There is evidence from the employer evaluations that there was genuine benefit and interest from meeting social work students and hearing and observing the enthusiasm which they had about joining the profession. Feedback indicates this appears to have had an unexpected knock-on effect which re-affirmed their own positioning within the social work profession and made them feel positive about the future.

Inviting alumni members has proved a crucial part of the Careers Fair. The inclusion of past students who are now qualified social work practitioners, working in the field, brought kudos to the event. Students who attended this seminar and listened to practitioners sharing their knowledge and experience open and honestly found this very beneficial. It could be that there is a closeness to each in the career ladder, alumni can still recollect the stress of application form filling and interviews and share their journeys and the students can connect to this. This demonstrates that alumni's involvement is core to any future career's events which GMSWA hold, in a nut shell their involvement completes the 'social work training cycle'.

We were very lucky to have such committed employers attend and provide excellent feedback on how we can develop this event and the benefits it brings to employers within GMSWA. In the future it would be useful for a specific evaluation to be drawn up which is pertinent to employers. Networking proved to be a big plus for both students and employers and the Careers Fair could most definitely be described as a 'connecting environment'. Comments from employers linked to their learning of what they needed to do in terms of recruitment at future careers events; what to bring, what was/was not useful. It might be of use for GMSWA to re-visit this with partners either before the next Careers Fair or for this to be added to the next evaluation.

Employers have raised the link between their recruitment procedures and when students complete their courses. This makes absolute sense for employers and HEI's to be having this discussion and for the timescales to be embedded within their assessment and recruitment schedules, to ensure we have a smooth recruitment transition of home-grown social work students into GMSWA employment agencies. It would also help alleviate the stress which some of the students raise i.e. the Careers Fair to occur at a time when students are in based in university/ and assessment/placement periods are complete. Employers will then become aware that this is a prime time for recruitment. Embedding this in the schedule of all HEI's timetables, employers can ensure their recruitment is aligned to this event and resources can be planned accordingly.

One student mentioned that they would prefer a half day and maybe GMSWA would want to consider this further, repeating the same event of scheduling topics which will benefit students at specific times of their learning i.e. applications forms/meeting the employers and on another dates interview skills and meeting NQSW's

A few students and employers raised accessibility to future venues in terms of car parking, public transport. Although the public transport links to media city are extremely good via the Metrolink, buses and there are places to park. We understand that a venue located in the centre of Manchester maybe more suited to all and more central in terms of distance for the geographical places where students will travel from. That said, a lot of students and employers, felt that the venue was suitable and enjoyed what it offered to the event.

Students were very happy with the range of employer stalls, but some suggested more adult and mental health agencies and local authority presence from specific areas. Hopefully, with further alignment and planning ahead this will allow for all GMSWA members to be able to block time out for this event in advance with a to view attendance being a key link to recruitment.

A huge thank you goes to everybody who contributed and worked so hard to make this event so successful.

GMSWA Careers Event 2018 Delivery Team

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Pauline Black: Project Organiser, Manchester Metropolitan University

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Erin King: Practice Learning Support for Students and Stall holders, University of Manchester

Abigail Hewitt: Administration Lead and Registration, University of Salford

Christine Reay: Registration, University of Salford

Shareen Denman: NQSW Panel: Student from University of Salford now working for Wigan LA

Kate Plant: NQSW Panel Member Student from University of Salford now working for Manchester LA

Bright Mude: NQSW Interview Panel: Student from University of Salford now working for Tameside LA

Calum Wiggle: NQSW Panel Member: Student from University of Salford now working for Manchester LA

Winnie Ebockayuk: NQSW Panel Member: Student from University of Salford for working for Birmingham LA

Jane Howard: Comms Lead University of Salford

Donna Peach: Social Media Lead (Twitter)

Matt Hughes (One Stop Social): Social Media (Twitter) GMSWA Comms

Fiona Christie: Careers Service Lead University of Salford

Nicola Ward: Careers Service Manchester Metropolitan University

Jane Whitmore: Careers Service University of Manchester

Catherine Sainsbury: Application Workshop Trafford LA

Beck Solway: Speed Interviews- Manchester LA

The practitioners and managers from GMSWA who took part in the Speed Interviews

Thank you

Gabi Hesk (Project Organiser Lead and Report Author, University of Salford)

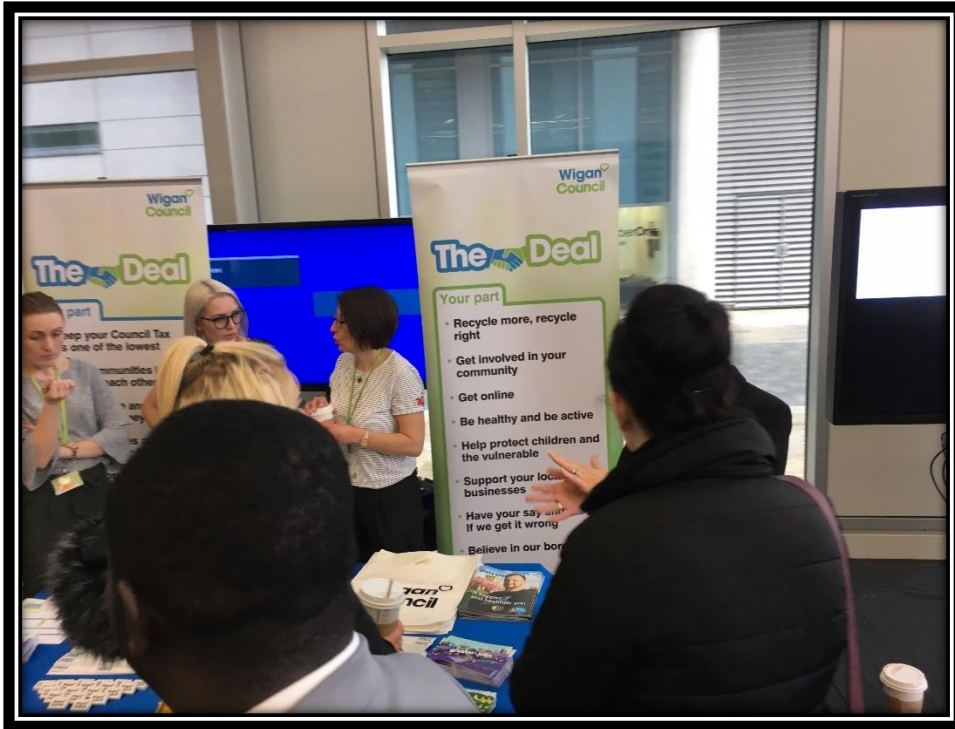
Pauline Black (Project Organiser, Manchester Metropolitan University)

Claire Harnett (Project Organiser University of Manchester)



Students arriving...





GMSWA member - Wigan LA



What goes around comes around... Salford Uni alumni, who now works for Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, recruiting social workers!

Matt from One Stop Social-GMSWA Comms



GMSWA member- Rochdale LA and GMSWA Twitter Board





Som of our PVI Sector partners ;Early Break and Catch 22





Some members of NQSW Panel





GMSWA member- Manchester LA



GMSWA member- Stockport LA



GMSWA member Bury LA



Caritas Care PVI partner